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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, July 30, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THE REFRIGERATOR." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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There isn't ANY housewife so neat and orderly but that she has some careless habit. Some place in her housekeeping is certain to be neglected. That's what I've heard my grandmother say more than once. And I can see her yet as she nodded her head wisely while she said it.

As for myself, I couldn't say whether that is true or not. But the other day when I dropped into a neighbor's kitchen shortly after mealtime, I was reminded of my grandmother's saying. This neighbor's weakness was her refrigerator.

She is an unusually efficient housekeeper in most ways, but she certainly wasn't getting the best possible service out of her refrigerator.

In the first place, she opened and closed that refrigerator door at least 8 times while she was clearing the supper table and putting away the food. A tray would have simplified matters enormously. If she had only taken a tray to the table and loaded onto it the dishes that were to be transferred to the refrigerator! That would have meant opening the refrigerator door once instead of 8 times. And many extra steps would have been saved. And of course less ice would have been melted. Had her refrigerator been an electric one, it would have meant less current used - money saved.

In the second place, this neighbor of mine wasn't treating her vegetables right. She had bought two days' supply of peas but had shelled them all. And for supper that night she had cooked up only enough for the one meal. The rest she had set into the refrigerator in an uncovered bowl.

Well, home economists tell me that peas are among the vegetables which it is desirable to purchase only in quantities sufficient for immediate use. Unless you intend to can them, of course. A hand to mouth existence is wisest when it comes to peas. Buy only one meal's supply at a time. Because peas, like sweet corn, deteriorate rapidly after they are separated from the plant.

Another thing these home economists say is: Don't shell peas until shortly before you cook them. Divorced from the pod, peas decline in flavor much more rapidly than they do in the pod. Of course, there are times when you almost have to get peas ready for the kettle hours ahead of time. As when you are having guests for dinner and want to shell the peas in the morning.

In a case like that, the wise thing to do is to adopt the cooking practise of the French - blanch them. Bring the peas just to the boil. That will stop the life processes at work in the peas and so check deterioration. Then just before



the dinner you can finish the cooking. Whether peas are shelled or in the pods they are best put into the refrigerator in a covered container.

Lettuce and spinach are two other vegetables sometimes subjected to the wrong refrigerator practise. With both, evaporation is rapid, because of the large leaves. So they, too, should be covered when they are put into the refrigerator.

I've seen some women put wilted spinach or lettuce into the refrigerator, thinking that the cold air would freshen them. But it won't. Wilting is caused by loss of water content. The only way a vegetable will regain its former crispness is by being put into cold water, so that it can take up moisture again.

Freshen your lettuce and spinach before you ever put them into the refrigerator. And also drain off the excess water first. Then put them into the dehydrator or into some such container. Lettuce and such salad greens should be put into covered ventilated pans, for they need higher humidity than is wise for most foods.

Vegetables with skins don't necessarily have to be put into covered containers, for their skins slow down evaporation. Peppers, for instance, can be just laid on the refrigerator shelf. So can tomatoes. Though both may be put into the dehydrator if there is room for them.

No vegetable should ever be put into the refrigerator dirty. Spinach should be cleaned and made ready for the kettle before it is set away. For cleanliness is one of the first rules of refrigerator care.

The interior of the refrigerator should get at least a weekly bath with sal soda water. A good proportion is a tablespoon of sal soda to four quarts of water. And that water might just as well be cold.

I know some women who use hot soapy water for washing the inside of the refrigerator. They seem to have the idea that the hot water will disinfect the place better. But there is just no way to subject the inside of a refrigerator to hot enough water - and long enough - to sterilize it. So these women might just as well use cold water, and keep cooler themselves, and leave the refrigerator cooler. The tablespoon of sal soda in the four quarts of water makes a pretty good disinfectant.

Not only the refrigerator floor and walls, but also the shelves and the trays, should get that weekly sal soda water bath. And of course, if anything is spilled in the refrigerator, it ought to be wiped up right away. A little spot of spilled food may develop into a very big, bad odor. Certainly it will if the right bacteria come along!

It's a good idea also to wipe off moisture that collects on the inside walls of the refrigerator. Even at ice box temperatures, moisture is favorable to the development of some microorganisms.

To summarize what we've said: Have a tray for a refrigerator accessory. Take foods from the refrigerator onto it. Reload foods onto it to return them to the refrigerator. Then you'll save both steps and expense. Buy peas enough for one meal only and shell them as late as possible. Don't put vegetables into your refrigerator until they are cleaned and freshened. And keep your refrigerator spotlessly clean if you want it to do its best work for you.

